

Yemen's army launches offensive in Taiz to relieve pressure on Marib

Author:

Wed, 2021-03-03 21:16

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's Army has launched a new offensive in the southern city of Taiz to break a six-year-long siege by the Iran-backed Houthis and ease military pressure on government forces in the central province of Marib, a Yemeni army spokesperson in Taiz told Arab News on Wednesday.

Abdul Basit Al-Baher said that hundreds of army troops on Tuesday night attacked Houthi-controlled locations on the western and eastern edges of the city, triggering clashes with the rebels.

During the early hours of the offensive, the army troops liberated a number of villages and mountainous locations and killed at least 12 Houthis and destroyed military equipment.

"The national army activated four battlefields in Taiz and managed to push Houthi militia from different locations," Al-Baher said, adding that the army is pushing to break the Houthi siege on Taiz and open a strategic road that links Taiz with the Red Sea areas. If the government forces seize control of Al-Bareh, the epicenter of the fighting, government forces will be able to partially end the Houthi siege on Taiz and funnel fighters and military equipment from the western regions.

About the timing of the offensive, local Yemeni commanders say that the Houthis in Taiz have been weakened since they sent their elite forces and heavy equipment to participate in the movement's offensive on the central city of Marib.

"The Yemeni Army offensive partly aims to ease military pressure on Marib," Al-Baher said.

On Wednesday afternoon, artillery shells fired by the Houthis landed in areas close to Al-Thawra hospital in the eastern part of the city, residents said. No one was reportedly hurt in the shelling.

The Houthis have imposed a siege on the city of Taiz, Yemen's third-largest city, since early 2015, after failing to seize control of the city due to strong resistance from army troops and resistance fighters.

The Houthi siege has stifled the densely populated city, pushing tens of thousands of people to the brink of famine and triggering condemnation from local and international rights groups.

Houthis earlier this month renewed a major offensive to recapture the central city of Marib, the Yemeni government's last stronghold in the northern half of Yemen.

In the western province of Hodeidah, a civilian was killed and his brother was wounded when an artillery shell fired by the Houthis exploded inside their house on Tuesday night in the town of Hays, south of Hodeidah city, local media said.

The Joint Forces, an umbrella term for three major military units in the country's western coast, said that Houthi sporadically shelled civilian areas in Hays, causing panic among residents.

A truce imposed under the Stockholm Agreement in 2018 has largely failed to bring peace to contested areas in Hodeidah as local rights organizations say that hundreds of civilians have been killed in shelling and by land mines planted by the Houthis during the last three years.

Yemen's government has hailed US sanctions on two Houthi military leaders for orchestrating terrorist strikes inside and outside Yemen.

Yemeni Minister of Information Muammar Al-Eryani described the US decision as a "right step" on the path to punishing the Houthi group for rejecting peace ideas and launching deadly attacks on civilians across Yemen and in Saudi Arabia.



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8 killed in Houthi attack on Yemen's army chief
Yemen minister says Iranian media shows Tehran 'behind Houthi escalation in Marib'

Israel accuses Iran of 'environmental terrorism' after oil spill

Wed, 2021-03-03 20:42

JERUSALEM: Israel on Wednesday accused Iran of "environmental terrorism" after a devastating oil spill off its Mediterranean coast it said was perpetrated by a Libyan-flagged ship that set sail from Iran.

"A Libyan-flagged pirate ship that departed from Iran was responsible," Israel's environment protection minister Gila Gamliel said on Twitter.

"Iran is waging terrorism by harming the environment," she said, calling the spill "not just an environmental crime but environmental terrorism."

Storms last month washed tonnes of sticky tar ashore along Israel's entire Mediterranean coastline, staining 160 kilometres (96 miles) of beach from its borders with the Gaza Strip to Lebanon.

Gamliel told reporters that the ship responsible had "entered Israel's exclusive economic zone and deliberately polluted" the waters.

The accusation comes after the Jewish state accused Iran of a recent attack late last month on an Israeli-owned ship in the Gulf Oman, further raising tensions between the arch foes.

Iran has denied any role in the explosion that hit the MV Helios Ray, leaving two holes in its side but causing no casualties.

Israel has declared last month's oil spill as one of its worst ecological disasters in recent history.

Volunteers have teamed up with authorities to clean the beaches, while officials from the environmental protection ministry launched an investigation into the source of the spill.

Oil also washed up on southern Lebanon, where thick tar balls hit a swathe of coastline which includes some of the country's best preserved beaches.

The area includes a maritime reserve which hosts a nesting site for turtles which usually appear later in the year.

As well as endangered loggerhead and green sea turtles, the beach provides shelter for the Arabian spiny mouse.



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Israeli-owned cargo ship back at sea after suspected attack
Oil spill off Israel reaches south Lebanese beaches

[Why Iran's hate-filled public school curriculum should be a global concern](#)

Wed, 2021-03-03 20:07

WASHINGTON, D.C.: The government of Iran remains the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism, and unfortunately its educational curriculum is no exception. Public school teachers in Iran today use textbooks designed by the state to indoctrinate young people to export global revolution using terrorism and other aggressive means. As a result, the content of its textbooks should be a global concern.



Image titled "Let's Go" from a current Iranian state textbook depicting an IRGC officer killed in Syria named Mohsen Hojaji. Grade 10, Defense Preparation, page 123. (Supplied)

I recently completed the first comprehensive study of hate and extremism in current Iranian textbooks in nearly half a decade as part of my ongoing work with the Anti-Defamation League, the results of which are accessible in full on the ADL website.

Evaluating teaching materials to identify and discourage hateful content is an important trend in the Middle East. Accordingly, this essay reproduces key findings from the ADL research and adds several notable new examples beyond the content in the original report.

The Iranian state curriculum especially encourages terrorism and political subversion against Arab states in particular. It also demonizes America, Israel and the Jewish people, including in ways that are part and parcel with these same hateful conspiracy theories and calls to violence.

For this reason, condemning the problematic content in Tehran's textbooks is only part of the solution. We should also redouble efforts to teach peace-building and interfaith tolerance in every country's textbooks, so that it is harder to exploit suspicions between East and West, between Sunnis and Shiites, or between Muslims, Jews, Christians and followers of other faiths.

The Iranian government's current textbooks indoctrinate children with messages that put them on a permanent footing for war. The books teach children how to assemble assault rifles, to carry out military maneuvers, and to learn about the importance of cyber warfare.



Graphic from a lesson on cyber warfare. Grade 10, Defense Preparation, p. 126. (Supplied)

The books also idealize young people who sacrifice their lives to sustain or export the Iranian revolution. Often this involves glorifying child soldiers who fought and died under traumatic circumstances during the Iran-Iraq War or displaying children wielding weapons of war, including a rocket launcher.

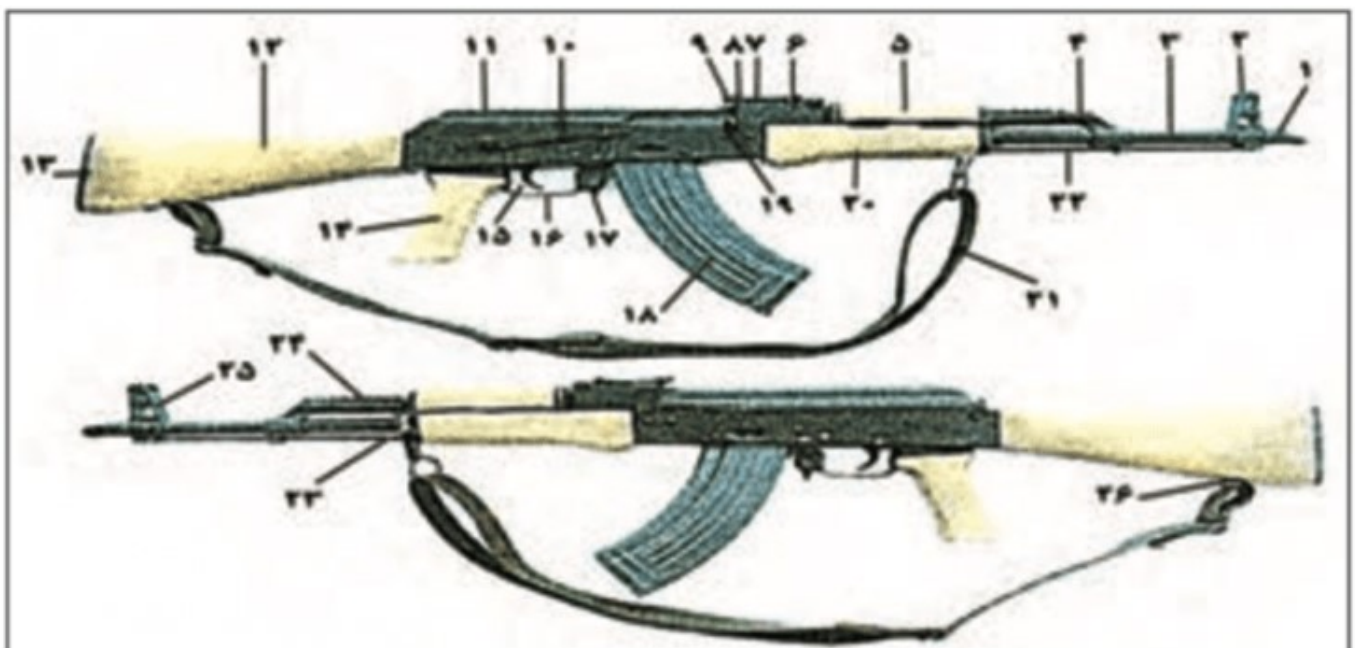
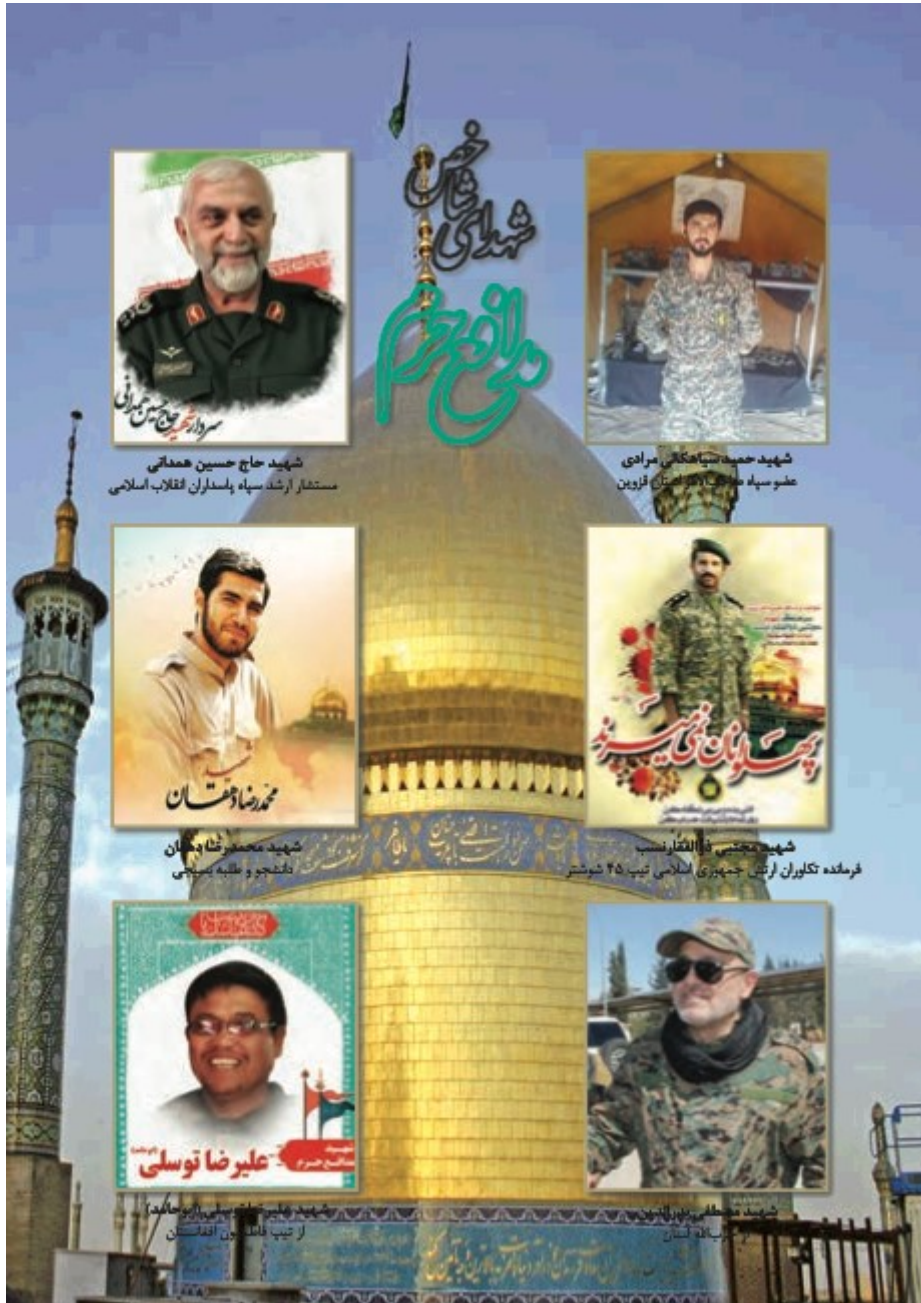


Diagram listing the parts of a Kalashnikov assault rifle. Grade 10, Defense

Likewise, the textbooks glorify a 20-year-old Iranian named Muhammed Reza Dehghani as a “model martyr defending the shrines.” Dehghani was killed within weeks of deploying to Syria as a volunteer fighter for the student wing of Iran’s Basij paramilitary. The books also teach that an ideal Basij member always yearns for martyrdom.



Textbook passage depicting Hezbollah’s Mustafa Badreddine and the founder of the Afghan Fatemiyoun Brigade as “model martyrs” killed in supposed defense of Syria’s Islamic shrines, shown at bottom right and bottom left. Student Basij volunteer Muhammed Reza Dehghani is depicted middle left. Grade 10, Defense Preparation, p. 45. (Supplied)

Also presented on the same textbook page listing “model martyrs defending the shrines” is Mustafa Badreddine, the deceased terrorist mastermind of Lebanese Hezbollah, as well as Ali Reza Tavassoli, a founder of the Fatemiyoun Brigade, one of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ proxy groups that

recruits young Afghan men, including child soldiers, to fight in Syria.

This year Iran's state curriculum added passages across numerous subjects to celebrate the martyrdom of the IRGC's late terror master, Qassem Soleimani. For example, an official textbook on military studies now features a graphic under the heading "Templates and Models of Steadfastness and Resistance."

In addition to Soleimani, the picture includes Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, whom it calls a "model martyr of the Islamic World." At the time of their death in 2020, both al-Muhandis's Kata'ib Hezbollah in Iraq and Soleimani's IRGC Quds Force were US-designated terrorist groups.



"Lesson 6: Templates and Models of Steadfastness and Resistance". Qassem

Soleimani is shown at center top. Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis is shown at second right, with the label "model martyr of the Islamic world" appended in the associated caption. Image from a current Iranian state textbook, Grade 10, Defense Preparation, p. 45. (Supplied)

Militant language is even applied to policies that Tehran insists have no military application. Remarkably, a current high school textbook presents the work of "the young Iranian nuclear scientists" as "a blessing with your great jihad and the blood of your bounteous youths."

دستیابی به فناوری هسته‌ای صلح‌آمیز، یکی از عظیم‌ترین و افتخارآمیزترین دستاوردهای فنی و علمی انقلاب اسلامی است. دسترسی به چرخه سوخت هسته‌ای، یعنی فرایند تبدیل اورانیوم طبیعی به



تأسیسات هسته‌ای نظنز

سوخت موردنیاز برای تولید انرژی هسته‌ای، دانش فنی بسیار پیچیده و پیشرفته‌ای است که تنها معدودی از کشورهای جهان به آن دست یافته‌اند. اما با همت و الا وعزم راسخ دانشمندان جوان ایرانی و به‌رغم توطئه‌ها و مخالفت‌های همیشگی دشمنان انقلاب اسلامی، دانشمندان هسته‌ای ایران موفقیت‌های بسیاری کسب کرده‌اند.

امام خمینی دربارهٔ حفظ دستاوردهای انقلاب گفته است: «به ملت عزیز ایران توصیه می‌کنم که نعمتی که با جهاد عظیم خودتان و خون جوانان برومندان به دست آورده‌اید، همچون عزیزترین ...With the great ambition and determination of the young Iranian scientists and in spite of the constant conspiracies and oppositions of the enemies of the Islamic Revolution, Iranian nuclear scientists have achieved many successes. Imam Khomeini has said about protecting the achievements of the revolution: 'I advise the dear nation of Iran to know that you have achieved a blessing with your great jihad and the blood of your bounteous youths'...» [Natanz Nuclear Facilities]. Grade 11, History of Contemporary Iran, p. 230. (Supplied)

Those most immediately impacted by Iran's radical curriculum are its Arab neighbors. For example, an eleventh-grade history textbook brazenly calls for the overthrow of the Kingdom of Bahrain, proclaiming that "the Bahraini revolution has not yet come to fruition" and that this should specifically include "the overthrow of Al-Khalifa rule."

و دگرگونی‌های جدید سیاسی در بحرین به حساب آورد. مردم بحرین به‌طور جدی خواستار انجام اصلاحات اساسی و برکناری حکومت آل خلیفه هستند و در این راه شهدای زیادی را تقدیم کرده‌اند ولی به دلیل حمایت خارجی از آن رژیم و سرکوب شدید مردم، انقلاب بحرین هنوز به نتیجه نرسیده است.



میدان لؤلؤ، نقطه آغازین قیام بحرینیان

“...The people of Bahrain are seriously demanding the implementation of fundamental reforms and the overthrow of Al Khalifa rule, and in this way they have sacrificed many martyrs, but due to foreign protection of this regime and severe repression of the people, the Bahraini revolution has not yet come to fruition. [Pearl Square, the starting site of the Bahrainis’ uprising]” Grade 11, *The History of Contemporary Iran*, page. 251. (Supplied)

This passage is part of an entire chapter focused on exporting Iran’s revolution across the Arab world. It advocates for uprisings in recent years against what it calls “puppet” governments in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen in hopes of advancing what the books laud as “the school of Hajj Qassem Soleimani.” The chapter also expresses noteworthy admiration for the Muslim Brotherhood and its founder, Hassan al-Banna.

These extremist messages are then supplemented with intolerance and conspiracy theories. For example, a current tenth-grade textbook on Defense Preparation teaches the false allegation that Saudi Arabia and America created Daesh as an act of sabotage against Iran. A religious law textbook for the same grade suggests that the followers of certain religious creeds are physically unclean, including Buddhists, Baha’is and Saudi Salafis.

حسن البنا (۱۲۸۵-۱۳۲۷ ش/۱۹۰۶-۱۹۴۹ م)



مبارز اسلام‌گرای مصری بود که به همراه عده‌ای از همفکرانش جمعیت اسلامی «اخوان المسلمین» (الاخوان المسلمون) را در اسفند ۱۳۰۶ / مارس ۱۹۲۸ بنیان نهاد. هدف وی ایجاد پیوند برادری و وحدت امت اسلامی برای بازیابی عظمت و شکوه اسلام از طریق احیای احکام و شعائر مذهبی، مبارزه با فسق و فجور و بی بندوباری، از بین بردن

روحیه تردید و بی‌اعتقادی بود. از نظر وی وحدت امت اسلامی ستون جامعه اسلامی محسوب می‌شد. حسن البنا برای تحقق اندیشه‌ها و نظریات خود مؤسسات گوناگون فرهنگی - مذهبی تأسیس و روزنامه «اخوان المسلمین» را منتشر کرد. وی به منظور ارتقای سطح معرفتی و انسانی زنان مسلمان نیز تشکیلات «اخوات المسلمات» را تأسیس کرد. وی همچنین از پیشگامان تقریب مذاهب اسلامی و جزو مؤسسان «جماعة التقريب بين المذاهب الاسلاميه» در قاهره بود. در نهضت بیداری تحت رهبری حسن البنا، مسئله صهیونیسم و استعمارگر جدید یعنی آمریکا جایگاه مهمی داشت. با تلاش‌های مستمر او، اخوان المسلمین روز به روز گسترش یافت و شعبه‌های آن از چهار شعبه در سال ۱۳۰۸ ش / ۱۹۲۹ م به هزار شعبه در سال ۱۳۲۷ ش / ۱۹۴۸ م رسید و بین سال‌های ۱۳۲۵-۱۳۲۷ ش / ۱۹۴۶-۱۹۴۸ م نیز شعبه‌های آن در فلسطین، سودان، عراق و سوریه دایر شد. در اوایل زمستان ۱۳۲۷ / اواخر ۱۹۴۸ م، اخوان المسلمین خطری جدی برای پادشاهی مصر به‌شمار می‌رفت؛ از این رو، تصمیم به انحلال آن گرفته شد. حسن البنا نیز در ۲۳ بهمن ۱۳۲۷ / ۱۲ فوریه ۱۹۴۹ توسط عوامل دولت مصر ترور شد.

حسن البنا، با «جدایی دین از سیاست» (سکولاریسم) و نیز ملی‌گرایی غیردینی، به شدت مخالف بود و جدایی دین از سیاست را «نخستین گام سستی و منشأ فساد» می‌دانست. همچنین درباره عرب‌گرایی نیز بر این عقیده بود که اسلام هیچ‌گونه مرز جغرافیایی، یا اختلافات نژادی یا شهروندی را به رسمیت نمی‌شناسد. حسن البنا تمام مسلمانان را یک «امت» و کشورهای مسلمان را تنها یک کشور می‌دانست.

A complementary profile of Hassan al-Banna, who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Page 238 of an 11th grade textbook ostensibly on the topic of Iranian national history. (Supplied)

The Iranian curriculum casts America as today's leading villain in a perennial conflict between Islam and imperialism. The books characterize America as "the Great Satan" and claim international sanctions against Iran are merely part of Washington's "Satanic plan" to subjugate the nations of the world and to destroy people's faith in Islam.



Graphic from a current Iranian state textbook, Grade 10, Defense Preparation, p. 120. The text in red translates to “Sanctions”. The text in black says “Iran.” (Supplied)

The textbooks also claim that America and other Western nations are engaged in a conspiracy to spread disbelief and moral corruption using such tools as drugs and video games, and that Western Christians who try to spread their faith are engaged in this widespread imperialist plot rather than a genuine expression of their religious doctrine.

Such disinformation is even applied to the issue of the global pandemic by Iran’s latest official textbooks, which teach that foreign media has exaggerated the coronavirus to deter Iranians from pro-regime rallies and to create panic about medical shortages.



فعالیت (۳)

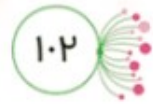
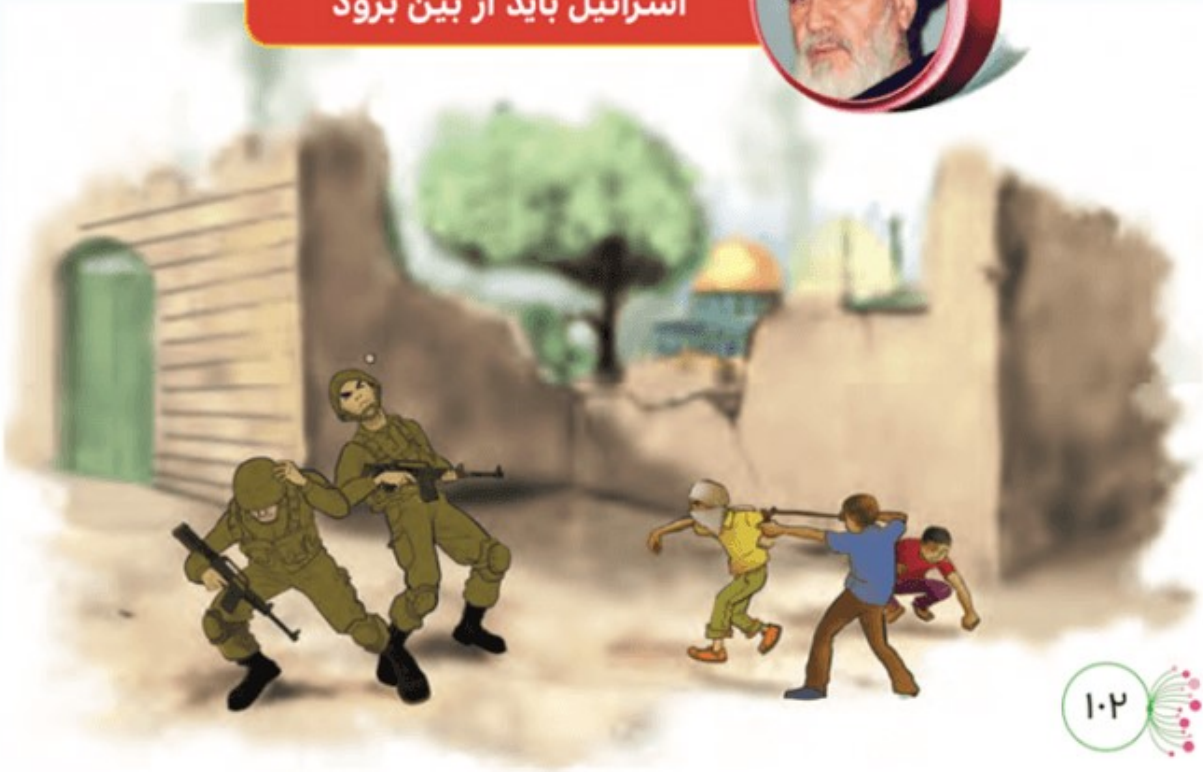
چرا رسانه‌های خارجی به صورت هماهنگ با شایعه تکثیر کرونا، مردم را از حضور در جشن ملی ۲۲ بهمن منع می‌کردند؟

“Why did the foreign media inhibit people from attending the national celebration of the 22nd of Bahman (i.e. the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution on 2/11/20) in a coordinated way with rumors of the spread of Corona?”

Grade 10, Defense Preparation, p. 121. (Supplied)

Unsurprisingly, the state of Israel is targeted for explicit overthrow by Iran's official textbooks. Graphics in the books today teach the chant “Death to Israel” and feature the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's instruction that “Israel must be wiped out.”

اسرائیل باید از بین برود



Graphic from a current Iranian state textbook with the Khomeini quotation “Israel Must be Wiped Out”. Grade 5, Heaven’s Gifts: Islamic Education and Training, p. 102. (Supplied)

But Tehran’s animus is not directed solely at Israel. Its curriculum also encourages a fundamentally anti-Jewish narrative of human history from ancient to modern times, selectively presenting Jewish people in an overwhelmingly negative way.



Graphic of a boy holding a sign that says “Death to Israel,” from a lesson about Iranian government marches for International Quds Day. Grade 7, Heaven’s Messages: Islamic Education and Training, pp. 120-122. (Supplied)

For example, Saudi Arabia recently instituted textbook passages teaching the Charter of Madinah as a model for Muslim-Jewish coexistence. The Iranian curriculum, on the other hand, still places much greater emphasis on the example of Jewish tribes that broke that pact, suggesting that Jews in general are untrustworthy and seek to destroy Islam.

Iran’s textbooks similarly scapegoat Jewish people for a range of societal ills in a way that propagates longstanding anti-Jewish generalizations such as greed, disloyalty or world domination.

Debates over the appropriate direction for Muslim prayer or the possibility of inaccurate hadiths are each presented as the work of immoral Jewish conspiracies. So are Freemason clubs.

As is global media consolidation. Furthermore, all Jewish people who aspire to any form of self-determination are labeled “enemies of Islam,” even those

who advocate for a two-state solution and Palestinian statehood.

The anti-Americanism and anti-Jewish bigotry in Iran's official curriculum are essential pieces of its radical orientation. This includes its justification for enmity toward Iran's Arab neighbors, who are depicted unjustly as servants of Jewish and colonial interests.

When the books accuse Saudi Arabia of creating Daesh, they claim this is in service to "Zionism and Global Arrogance." They present wars in the region as a Zionist conspiracy to incite strife among Muslims, and Arab leaders are portrayed as "ignorant and extremist Muslims" sought out by America, Israel and the West to slander Islam.



Image from a current Iranian state textbook, in a lesson titled "Cultural Attack". Grade 9, Heaven's Messages: Islamic Education and Training, p. 105.
(Supplied)

The greatest tool nations in and beyond the region can use to combat this incitement would be to redouble efforts at instituting tolerance education and removing any remaining teachings that others could exploit to spread hate, mistrust or extremism.

This includes rooting out vestiges of lessons that present Israel and Zionists as "the enemy" or perpetuate dangerous stereotypes about Jewish people.

It includes ensuring that doctrinal disputes, such as between Sunni and Shiite Islam, are addressed by curricula in ways that recognize and respect important differences while ensuring that minorities are not marginalized by educational messages that could lead to recruitment by extremists or violence from within either community.

And it includes teaching that America, Europe and non-believers worldwide are potential friends and partners, not enemies of Islam per se.

Of course, effectively teaching tolerance can never be a one-way street. America, Israel, and all nations must do more to teach all kinds of tolerance as well, and that should include much greater tolerance toward Muslims, toward Arabs, and toward Palestinians and their legitimate aspirations for statehood as well.

It means teaching our young people to be not only patriots but also global citizens, and that humanity's future depends upon our collaboration across political and religious boundaries to address shared challenges.

* **David Andrew Weinberg is Washington Director for International Affairs at Anti-Defamation League. Twitter: [@DavidAWeinberg](https://twitter.com/DavidAWeinberg)**



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Houthi militias 'blow up Yemen schools, push pro-Iran curricula' Al Jazeera accused of 'Iranian propaganda par excellence' with Qassem Soleimani podcast

Syrian victims of chemical strikes file case with French prosecutors

Wed, 2021-03-03 03:04

PARIS: Lawyers representing survivors of a chemical weapons attack in 2013 in Syria have filed a criminal complaint against Syrian officials whom they blame for the deaths of hundreds of civilians in a rebel-held area.

France is home to thousands of Syrian refugees, and its investigating judges have a mandate to determine whether crimes against humanity were committed anywhere in the world.

The case, which about a dozen people have joined, follows a similar one opened in Germany last year. It offers a rare legal avenue for action against the government of President Bashar Assad.

Attempts by Western powers to set up an international tribunal for Syria have been blocked by Russia and China at the UN Security Council.

"This is important so that the victims have the possibility to see those responsible being brought to justice and held accountable," Mazen Darwish, who heads the Paris-based Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM), said.

The SCM filed the complaint along with two other NGOs: the Open Society Foundation's Justice Initiative and Syrian Archive.

BACKGROUND

France is home to thousands of Syrian refugees, and its investigating judges have a mandate to determine whether crimes against humanity were committed anywhere in the world.

France's intelligence services concluded in 2013 that a sarin gas attack on the Eastern Ghouta region just south east of Damascus that killed 1,400 people had been carried out by Syrian government forces.

The complaint is based on what the lawyers say is the most comprehensive body of evidence on the use of substances such as sarin gas in Syria.

"We have compiled extensive evidence establishing exactly who is responsible for these attacks on Douma and Eastern Ghouta, whose horrific effects continue to impact survivors," said Hadi Al-Khatib, founder and director of Syrian Archive.

A UN-commissioned investigation to identify those behind chemical weapons attacks in Syria concluded in 2016 that Syrian government forces had used chlorine and sarin gas.

Darwish said he expected another case to be opened in Sweden in the coming months.



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US ambassador to UN demands information on Syria detainees
Syrian victims of chemical attacks file case with French prosecutors

[Sahara tension: Moroccan row deepens with Germany](#)

Wed, 2021-03-03 02:52

RABAT: Morocco's Foreign Ministry has suspended ties with the German Embassy because of "deep misunderstandings," notably related to the disputed Western Sahara.

Morocco is angered by German criticism of former US President Donald Trump's recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara in return for moves by Rabat to normalize its relations with Israel.

A letter leaked online from Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita to the rest of the government orders officials to suspend "all contact, interaction and cooperation" with the German Embassy and embassy-related activities.

A senior Moroccan government official confirmed on Tuesday that the letter was authentic, but said it was not meant to be made public.

The official also noted the appearance of a flag of the pro-independence

Polisario Front outside the state assembly in the northern German city of Bremen. Germany's Foreign Ministry said it was aware of media reports about the letter.

The Algeria-backed Polisario Front fought for independence for Western Sahara after Morocco annexed the former Spanish colony in 1975. UN peacekeepers now monitor a 30-year-old cease-fire between Moroccan forces and Polisario supporters.

The UN has expressed concern that Trump's decision could thwart negotiation efforts in the long-running Western Sahara conflict.



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Pompeo says US has started work to set up consulate in Western Sahara
Morocco cuts contacts with German embassy in WSahara spat